

CHAPTER VII. THE

CONFLICT FOR RELIGIOUS LIBERTY IN FRANCE.

THE father of the Reformation in France was Jacques Lefevre d'Etaples (Faber Stapulensis). He was not only independent of Luther; he preceded him as an evangelical theologian, if not as an aggressive reformer. Lefevre was a doctor of the Sorbonne, and taught mathematics and physics at Paris for many years before he gave himself in his old age to the serious study of the Scriptures. He was one of the earlier champions of the new culture in France, and his merits as a scholar and teacher earned him the favour of Louis XII. and Francis I. To his pupils he was "The Restorer of Philosophy." Of some of them at least he was also the spiritual father, who taught them to see in the Bible the only source of faith. In 1512 he published a Latin commentary on the Epistles of St Paul, with a new translation of the text from the Greek. Ten years later followed his commentary, also in Latin, on the Gospels. During the next six years he completed a translation into French of both the Old and New Testaments. These works show the trend of the teaching of the venerable reformer. The authority of the Bible, justification by faith, the nullity of good works apart from faith, the invalidity of the mass except as a commemoration of the sacrifice of Christ, the all-sufficiency of Christ apart from pope, hierarchy, or schoolmen, are the cardinal doctrines of the man who formed in William Farel the future reformer of Geneva. Such heresies were sufficient to -bring on him the condemnation of the Sorbonne, and he owed his safety from the consequences of his expulsion to the protection of Francis I. and his sister Marguerite, Queen of Navarre. He found a congenial refuge at Meaux, the episcopal seat of W. Brignonnet, the patron of all the reforming spirits of the day, the champion of a reform within the Church on scriptural lines. To a Lefevre, a Brignonnet, reform did not